

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Hilary King: Three Poems

Hilary King · Monday, August 3rd, 2026

Curtains at the Supreme Court

For half a semester we'd traced cases through
the lower courts. *Marbury v. Madison*.
Brown v Board of Education. Today
we'd met at dawn, rode two hours on a bus
to wait in line, our professor reminding us:
The highest court in the land.
At last we took our reverence inside.
The room was smaller than I imagined:
We were close to the justices and they to us.
We could hear them cough, see their frowns.
Still, the ceilings were very high, the windows tall.
Curtains hung behind the eight men and Sandra Day.
One has a bad back, our professor had told us,
he needs to stretch, and sure enough, one of them
would get up mid-argument and disappear behind
the curtains, a magician. When he came back, there was
no trick, just tough, thoughtful questions that shook
the lawyers presenting. We were young then, students,
audience to democracy's *Ta da!* Now it's America
that's being locked into a box and sawed in half.

*

Hartsfield International

Built on the ghost of a racecourse,
it's the busiest airport in the world.
Signs everywhere proclaim this busyness.
Bees know their hive. I join the swarm
buzzing down the long grey hallway,
past coffee shops and fast food restaurants,
around a volleyball team with ponytails swinging,

halting when a man in loafers stops
 to answer a phone call with a barky laugh.
 I am passing through to Virginia, toward
 my mother's last days, sorrow
 tucked into my carry-on. At my gate
 I imagine this a Buddhist temple
 and the gate a *samnon*, tall and wide as
 the idea that we can be someone else up there.
 Suddenly I am, as the agent passes her hand
 over my boarding pass and rechristens me,
Have a blessed day, baby.

*

Meet Me in the Middle of the Movies

I mostly see movies in black and white these days,
 at the theater one town over that shows only classics,
 7 bucks a ticket, 3 dollar popcorn.
 Previews are an old guy playing the organ,
 his foot sweeping out to the pedal.
 When the lights go down, so does he, descending
 into what heaven lies beneath the screen.
 I do like the way the new theater chairs lie back, recline
 deep into our bank accounts. Remember *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*?
 A tv show that taught us to be rich was to watch
 movies at home, in a special room stiff with overstuffed chairs,
 a popcorn machine, a candy counter if your dad was a tv producer.
 Now my son watches movies in his bed on a screen the size of his palm,
 watches them while doing homework or playing video games. Ray Bradbury
 used to spend all day at the movies, whole Saturdays staring at a screen.
 Ideas were as available as apples. In some old movies, characters meet
 in the middle of a film, have a whispered conversation, then leave. No one minds,
 no one shushes them, the movies then a meeting place, a park with silver sunlight.
 At the old theater near me, *Casablanca* plays every year. Everyone in the audience
 stays for the singing of "La Marseillaise," for Rick and Elsa, for a time when the Nazis
 were on their way to being defeated and a beautiful friendship beginning.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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